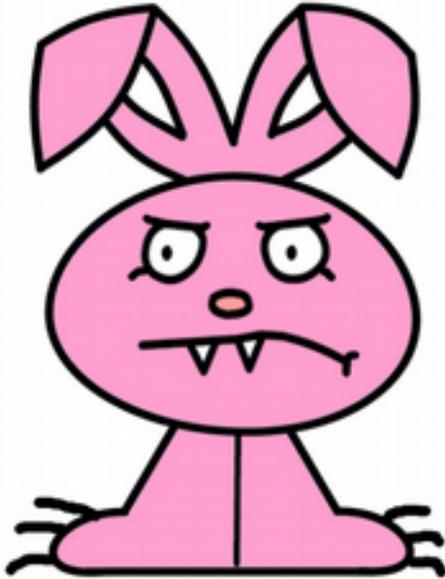


The Panther's Claw



FADE IN:

EXT. EDGE - NIGHT - Kampala



A young teenager ducks into a dark alley. He peers along the wall in the moonlight, examining the graffiti of the school kids and youth gangs. He stops when he finds what he is looking for.

It is a rabbit, crudely drawn with colored chalk. He measures off several paces to the left and finds a small crevice in the wall. It is no different from dozens of others except for its distance from the symbol.

He reaches up and carefully feels inside to find a wad of used chewing gum stuck to the concrete. Tearing it off, he wraps it in a piece of tissue and puts it in his pocket.

The teen scurries home and gingerly works to free a small item trapped inside. It is a carefully wrapped microSD card with important files for his uncle, the Colonel.

The alley is a drop site and the boy is part of the resistance. Though not yet fully grown, he is already a man. His eyes have the steely look of someone who has left childhood far behind.

Int. Colonel's Office - Just Before Lunch Hour

A tough looking man in army fatigues stares out the window. His thoughts go back to the horrific scenes he encountered when his team took down a child trafficking ring some months before.

How he wishes he could erase those horrors from his mind but they keep coming back to haunt him.

Suddenly, the alarm on his wristwatch startles him. Lunch time already? He opens the door and speaks to his secretary seated outside at her desk.

COLONEL

Gitti, I'm going off base for lunch today.

GITTI

Don't forget the meeting with General Hardass Sir. All senior officers are required to attend.

COLONEL

No worries, I'll be back by 13:00. Do you want anything while I'm out?

GITTI

Smiles... I'd ask for flowers sir but I don't think your wife would understand (giggles). How about some bottled water, the fountain appears to be broken again.

COLONEL

(muttering under his breath) No wonder, the maintenance budget was *cut in half* and the General's expense account was doubled.

GITTI

Shhhh.... The walls have ears. Go before YOU are *cut in half*. Don't forget what happened to your brother. (She has a concerned look on her face)

He hurries out and his thoughts turn to his brother. He was lost on a mission to bring down the warlord Kony and his murderous thugs.

The General pulled back his forces and left his brother's unit to be slaughtered, his way of silencing a dissident in the ranks.

Now he cares for his widow and their son, sheltering them under his own roof. He saw his brother's eyes again last night, when his nephew delivered the data.

Int. - Apu's Convenience Store

The Colonel drives to a local convenience store. The owner is in the resistance too, one of Raji's men. (Raji is a SS member of the PINK BUNNIES, just like the Colonel).



Raji

APU
Excuse me please,
what can I do for
you sir?

Colonel
Do you still carry
the flavored water
with the lemon twist?
(He flashes a secret
hand sign though the
store appears to be
empty)

APU
Of course Sir, the water is in
the back, let me show you.

In a back room, APU swiftly slides over a large shelving unit that was hiding a door.

The Colonel goes inside and switches on a flashlight hanging from the ceiling. The door is closed behind him and hidden again by the shelves.

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Note: THE ROOM DESCRIBED BELOW CAN BE FAKED, NO COST TO THE PRODUCTION. TO MAINTAIN THE ILLUSION OF AUTHENTICITY, JUST CHOOSE THE CAMERA ANGLES AND HANG A SIGN THAT SAYS "SECURE ROOM".

It looks like an ordinary room with nothing but a desk, chair, and a laptop computer. However, it is built to be "Tempest" proof (a Military term).

The room is encased in a tight copper mesh screen hidden in the walls, floor, ceiling, and door. It is grounded and absorbs all electronic signals.

There are no wires or pipes, no Internet, phone, power, or cable lines, no window, not even a light bulb. Ventilated air passes through the screen, in and out through two vents in the walls (that are otherwise bare). There is no path for an electronic emission to escape this space - it is a hidden "Secure Room".

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4.

Inside the room, the glare of the laptop joins the soft glow of the flashlight as the Colonel lifts the lid.

He quickly removes the microSD card from a small incision in his belt, slides it into a larger SD sleeve from the table, then inserts it into the side of the laptop.

The files are encrypted so he enters a complex sequence of keystrokes to unlock the data. An image of a Scotsman with "bunny ears" appears. He clicks the name "Daft Bastard" below it and an audio file starts playing.

In the headphones he hears the thick Scottish accent of his contact, a rogue operative from the Black Watch, one of the founding members of the PINK BUNNIES.



DAFT BASTARD

Aye Laddie, the PINK BUNNIES have released more intel and some of it impacts your area.

Inside the folder marked "Operation Panther's Claw" you'll find your next assignment.

The files contain names, locations, financial records, and surveillance footage. Data collected all across East Africa.

5.

Its evidence against politicians, church leaders, charity workers, police, and military officers, some in your own high command.

The dirty devils are trafficking children along with the usual graft and corruption.

You are going to have to go dark on this one lad, call up the Black Panther units and keep it quiet. Their orders are enclosed, use the authority he delegated to you.

There is another folder marked New Recruits. It has files on two men who are flying down as candidates for the new training program.

One was a clown, he blew the whistle on a nasty CIA op but that might have been just a ploy to gain our confidence.

The other was a mercenary for Blackwater. He'd kill his own Mum if the price was right.

Both of them claim to have turned over a new leaf but I'm not buying it.

Don't let them get anywhere near the school unless they are legit. If they are trying to infiltrate us, I want their guts for garters.

I mean it lad, no one can be taught our protocols unless they are proven trustworthy. There is too much at stake.

If they don't smell right, if they so much as blink wrong, make tobacco pouches out of their ball sacks and feed the rest to the pigs.

Good-luck lad. Remember your training and you'll do fine.

6.

The Colonels mind starts to race. Not more traffickers, I'm still not over the last bunch.

The Scot is right though, he muses, dark and quiet is the only way. Forget court- martial, if the General finds out I'm the "Panther's Claw" he'll have my balls for bookends. (His face drains at the thought of it).

Apu raps lightly at the door, signaling the coast is clear. The Colonel exits the room and APU hides the door behind the shelf again.

COLONEL

(whispers quietly) Make copies of the orders and distribute to the other secure sites. Have the local Majors meet me at the clearing at 0 nine hundred (9:00) Saturday. Dark protocols are in effect.

(The Colonel purchases a case of water and and a sandwich then leaves for the base before he is late.)

INT. - Saturday Morning - At the Secret Clearing

A half dozen men are lined up at attention, staring straight ahead. The Colonel is pacing back and forth in front of them. He is clearly energized, fired up with the passion of their cause.

COLONEL

Men, you are leaders of your Panther units. You are commanders of "da braddahs".

Have you seen the files?
Have you read your orders?

MAJORS

Yes sir, we have sir!
(in unison)

COLONEL

Then you know what those animals are doing to little kids. How they get rich off their suffering.

You also know that some of the police and military are involved. This isn't going to be easy, we are going to get bloody on this one.

MAJORS

Yes sir, we know sir!
(in unison)

COLONEL

I have just one question for you. Are you ready?

MAJORS

Yes sir, we are ready sir!
(in unison)

COLONEL

I can't hear you! Will you fight for these kids? Are you willing to die for these kids?

MAJORS

Yes sir, to the last man sir!
(shouting loudly in unison)

COLONEL

Good. Then go out there and make me proud! "Operation Panther's Claw" is now live.

You are dismissed - all except Kasirye, you come with me.

The men break ranks and leave to carry out their orders. All except Kasirye who rolls his eyes and walks sheepishly toward the Colonel.

=====

From here forward, there are two story lines:

- 1) The fight scenes for local ops.
- 2) The training school story with the Colonel and Kasirye.

Cut from one to the other at strategic points. For the fights , old footage can be reused to save money.

8.

The action does not have to be anything that Ramon Films has not already done. However, we need some footage portraying kids being freed from the traffickers after the fight scenes. It is the only new footage required to make the old footage work.

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Kasirye

Colonel, are you still mad about the party? The men needed to unwind and we paid for the damages. Why am I still pulling shit details? My orders say just one word - training!

COLONEL

(Grins) I had forgotten about that party.

Promote one of your Captains and have him take over your unit. I need you for the new training program.

Kasirye

But why? I'm not an instructor!

COLONEL

The Black Panther is gatekeeper for the program. "Da Braddahs" need to screen the new recruits before they reach the training center.

I want you to set up a gauntlet for them to run, from Nairobi all the way to Kampala.

Grind them into the dirt. Find out what they are made of.

Kasirye

Well, I do have a lot of contacts between here and there. I'm sure we can find some way to test their mettle.

COLONEL

You had better think of something fast, two noobs are flying into Nairobi tomorrow night looking for "de wey".

Kasirye

Hmmmm... I'll have someone from the Mungiki pick them up at the airport. He'll drag them through the back alleys of the ghetto and let the street braddahs sniff them over.

If they can win over his crew and live to see Hell's Gate, I'll be impressed.

I also know some villages where the elders have great wisdom. They can test them the traditional way and know what manner of spirit they have.

If they live through that, we'll send them through the refugee camps to see what their hearts are made of.

If they make it to Kampala at all, I'll be very surprised. They would have to be the real deal.

COLONEL

(Slaps his back) That's a good start "braddah" but add even more tests. We have to be absolutely certain.

Int. - Fight Scenes

Cut to fight scenes and rescue ops. Just enough footage to show the teams are out there fighting the traffickers and liberating kids. Surgical strikes, commando raids.

Int. - "De Wey" is hard

Cut back to the two noobs going through grueling, ridiculous tests like crawling through a "sewage ditch" with some "braddah" telling them it is "de wey".

Or hanging upside down from a tree while some "braddah" says "de wey" is down.

Or standing in a pile of garbage, or a dumpster, while a "braddah" says "de wey" is at the bottom.

Or in front of a big spider web while a "braddah" says "de wey" is forward.

10.

Anything like that, the more comical and over the top the better.

Keep cutting back and forth between the fight scenes and the ridiculous tests until the project is almost out of money and there are just two scenes left.

Int. - The Office of General Hardass - Morning

The head of the security forces, General Hardass, sits behind his desk. He is sweating profusely as he explains the situation to the President.

GENERAL HARDASS

No Sir, Mr. President, the opposition forces are blocking all the escape routes.
(unintelligible chatter)

They must have accessed our files sir, it appears they know everything. Last night a mob dragged the Minister for child protection through the streets and hung him from a light pole.
(unintelligible chatter)

No sir, over half the men have deserted and the rest are afraid to leave the base.
(unintelligible chatter)

I don't know either, sir. We seem to have no options left.
(hangs-up the phone)

The General stands up and sighs heavily. He turns his back to the camera and mutters to himself, *"I'm sure as hell not going to swing from some goddamn light pole"*.

He pulls out his service revolver and as the camera moves away to the window, a gunshot rings out and a loud thud is heard.

The camera lingers at the open window where the light of a brand new day is streaming in. Somehow it seems more bright and beautiful than ever before. The birds are singing and the faint sound of children laughing is heard in the distance, playing on their way to school.

Int. - Apu's Convenience Store - Morning - Epilogue

A bedraggled looking man limps into the store. He is dirty, disheveled, unshaven. His clothes are torn and he appears to be bleeding from several nasty cuts and bruises. He can barely stand and is clearly in distress. It is one of the noobs, the merc from Blackwater.

APU

Excuse me please, what are you doing sir.

Noob

I was told you can help me find the training center of the PINK BUNNIES.

APU

What is the password sir?

Apu leans across the counter and the man whispers something in his ear.

APU

That is correct sir, but I was expecting two recruits. Where is the other?

Noob

The clown? I lost him at a little place near Namisi. The elders had me mixing pig shit into fertilizer with my bare hands. They took him out back to have him feed the pigs but I never saw him after that.

APU

Correct again, the man was a spy sir. He has preceded you here but will not be receiving training. Tell me sir, do you smoke?

Noob

No, why do you ask?

APU

A man from that village makes handcrafted tobacco pouches. (He points to a display case). They are the finest quality, sir. I thought you might like a souvenir. (smiling)

Noob

Look Mister, I've been to hell and back so many times I lost count. Can you please just tell me how to get to the training center? (Strain showing on his face)

APU

Certainly sir, "de wey" is right away straight, then left, right?

The noob's eyes almost bug out of his head. He looks like he is about to blow a gasket.

Noob

What kind of silly ass directions are those? I'm about ready to lose my marbles and you babble that nonsense? (His eye twitches)

APU

Just joking sir, that's whats wrong with you Americans, always so stiff. You have no sense of ha ha.

The noob struggles to keep his composure, trying not to lose his cool over the jab. Every fiber of his being seems ready to snap.

APU

Relax sir, a Boda Boda will bring you to the training compound. It will take most of the night but the driver knows "de wey".

A motorcycle is heard pulling up outside. The noob limps toward the door, wincing with every step. He's heard about "de wey" at least a thousand times now and each time its brought him nothing but pain.

Just before he reaches the door, APU flashes a big grin and says:

APU

Training begins tomorrow sir. Fun time is over, now the hard part begins... (Noob groans as he limps away) **END**